

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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CINCPAC HON

INFO COMUSMACTHAI BKK

AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL UDORN

DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 18604

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, TH

SUBJ: CABINET RESHUFFLE RUMORS

REF: A) BANGKOK 9459; B) BANGKOK 4489 , C) BANGKOK 5215

SUMMARY: EVER SINCE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE KHUKRIT CABINET IN MARCH 1975, RUMORS CYCLICALLY REPORT AN IMPENDING CABINET RESHUFFLE. SOME CABINET CHANGES WILL PROBABLY OCCUR WHEN GEN KRIT SIWARA RETIRES SEPTEMBER 30. OTHER CHANGES ARE RUMORED TO OCCUR AFTER THE PASSAGE OF THE BUDGET BILL. END SUMMARY.

1. THE BANGKOK PRESS HAS FREQUENTLY REPORTED THAT PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT PRAMOT WILL RESSHUFFLE HIS CABINET. A TRANCHE OF SUCH REPORTS HAS OCCURRED ALMOST MONTHLY (REFA.) KHUKRIT HAS PUBLICLY STATED THAT HE WOULD LIKE TO SEE GEN KRIT SIWARA BECOME THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE UPON HIS RETIREMENT AS COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF THE ARMY ON SEPTEMBER 30.

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2. OTHER CABINET MINISTERS RUMORED IN PRESS AS LIKELY

TO BE CHANGED ARE AS FOLLOWS: MINISTER OF STATE UNIVERSITIES BUREAU, CHAN ANG SUCHOT; MINISTER OF INDUSTRY, SURIN THEP-KANCHANA; MINISTER OF JUSTICE, YAI SAWITCHAT; MINISTER OF COMMERCE, THONGYOT CHITTRAWIREA, DEPUTY MINISTER OF JUSTICE, BUNKHUM CHANISSURIYAWONG; DEPUTY MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND COOPERATIVES, ANAN PHAKPRAPHAI.

3. COMMENT: THE PRESENT COMPOSITION OF KHUKRIT'S CABINET REFLECTS HIS ATTEMPT TO BALANCE OFF PATRONAGE FOR PARLIAMENTARY SUPPORT OF THE GOVERNMENT. THE COMPOSITION OF THE CABINET HAS NEVER BEEN A SOURCE OF PRIDE TO THE PRIME MINISTER. A NUMBER OF THE PRESENT MINISTERS ARE LESS THAN COMPETENT (REF B & C).

4. MUCH OF THE PRESSURE FOR A CABINET RESHUFFLE COMES FROM PARLIAMENTARIANS WHO HAVE AN EXAGGERATED SENSE OF THEIR OWN ADMINISTRATIVE POTENTIAL AND POLITICAL SUPPORT IN THE PARLIAMENT. SOCIAL JUSTICE PARTY PARLIAMENTARIANS HAVE PARTICULARLY BEEN DISPLEASED AT THE LOW NUMBER OF CABINET POSTS DISTRIBUTED TO THAT PARTY DESPITE ITS SIZE AS THE SECOND LARGEST PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION. PRESS RUMORS OF A CABINET RESHUFFLE ARE, THEREFORE, CLEARLY INSPIRED BY PARLIAMENTARIANS TOOTING THEIR OWN HORN.

5. SOCIAL ACTION PARTY INSIDERS HAVE SUGGESTED THAT THE PRIME MINISTER CONSIDERS A NUMBER OF CABINET POSITIONS EXPENDABLE. THEY ARGUE THAT THE PRIME MINISTER WILL ALLOW INFREQUENT RESHUFFLES TO SPREAD PRESTIGE AND PATRONAGE, AND THEREFORE MAINTAIN PARLIAMENTARY SUPPORT FOR HIS CABINET. THEY DO NOT SEE A RESHUFFLE AS AN INDICATION THAT THE PRIME MINISTER IS IN FRAGILE AND PRECARIOUS POSITION.
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